How to / Trackmania / Mediatracker / Camera movement basics

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Introduction

In fact, the Camera movement is the most vital and most difficult part of the mediatracker. Even if you can start using simple camera modes pretty quickly, there's a lot of theory behind all the settings in the different camera modes, and some crucial differences.

I assume you're already familiar with the basic "Mediatracker workflow".

Enforced camera

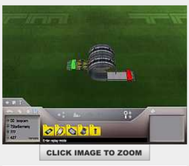
Whenever we place a camera in the Mediatracker, it means this camera view will be "enforced", allowing the driver no other view than the one we selected. Think twice before you force someone into "your" view, people are different and so are their driving styles.

Learning by doing

We will start to learn camera useage by producing the easiest of all camera effects:

The Looping camera (aka Loopcam)

Click icon to download our "LOOP CAM TEST TRACK", put it on your "Tracks/Challenges" folder and open it in the track editor.


CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Step 1
Open "the Loop cam test track".

Drive it once (or "Record Mediatracker Ghost"), so you can access the mediatracker content.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Step 2
Go to the mediatracker and to the "In Game" section.

As the name already says, we will now edit the content of the Ingame play.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Step 3
Because the mediatracker content is empty, a new clip will be initialised automatically and you will be asked to place one (or more) "triggers", which are represented by the green boxes.

Use your mouse and cursor to get a good view of the looping's entrance.

Now put a single trigger on the beginning of the looping, then deactivate the trigger box.

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Step 4
On this clip, add a new track "Camera" and "Camera Race".

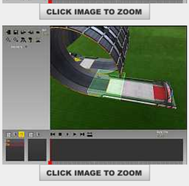
This will automatically insert a block of 3 seconds length into the track timeline. Don't bother about the 3 seconds, they're not important at the moment.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Step 5
Go to the 1st keyframe of the block to edit the camera settings.

Chose "Camera: Internal"

Activate "Keep on playing".
Now the block's content will keep on playing, even if the 3 seconds have passed. This is important because you never know how long someone will stay in the loop.


CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Step 6
Create a second clip and place a single trigger at the end of the loop. Leave it empty, so "nothing" happens in this clip.

Voila ! You made a perfect Loopcam !
Now you can go and play the track again, the loopcam is now in effect.

What is technically happening ?
As soon as the car reaches the entry of the loop, Clip1 will play and keep on playing.
As soon (and no earlier) the car reaches the end of the looping, Clip2 will play. Clip2 doesn't contain any new camera settings in it, and so the driver's view will be back to normal.

Why is the camera back to normal ? Clip2 doesn't contain any information ?
Remember what we learned before ? A new clip will automatically STOP the previous clip from playing. No exception. So technically, we didn't really "change" the view at the end of the looping, we just "stopped" the special camera from Clip1 from playing.

Multiple Camera blocks

Of course you can only place 1 camera block at a time. But you're free to place multiple camera blocks after each other, even of a different kind (race/path/custom).

For reasons of clearness, the different types of cameras are represented by different colours.
RED = **Custom** Camera
WHITE = **Race** Camera
AQUA = **Path** Camera

Responibility in Camera useage

Usually you'll place a camera to help people, to give them a better view in loopings & wallrides. However, forcing them to view the track from a specific perspective, brings some responsibility.

A badly placed camera change is not only useless, it is harmful.
The human eye needs some time to get accustomed to a new viewing perspective, it's not different in a computer game like Trackmania. When a driver approaches a criticial situation in high speed, the last thing on earth he needs is a sudden, unexpected camera change.

Example:
You build a track with a small fast looping and place a loop camera in it. After the looping, the road directly goes into a sharp left curve, with little to no time for the driver to react to that sudden change in direction.

Knowing what I told you above, would you still place an empty trigger at the end of the looping, which will switch back to the driver's normal camera, like in our tutorial above? I wouldn't ...

I would let the looping camera play until the driver has managed this critical situation completely, and then switch back to normal view as soon as he's "out of danger"...

A badly timed camera change is just as bad.
Trackmania itself needs some little time, maybe 2-3/100 of a second to switch from one camera perspective to another.

When driving fast, the car will have driven quite a way within this little time. And if a camera change comes too late to adjust your own view in a critical situation, it's just as useless and harmful as a camera, which is placed in the wrong location.

How to find the right spots to place triggers for camera changes?
Drive the questionable sections with the expected speed without any enforced cameras and switch cameras by your hand (hopefully you reconfigured your keyboard input in a way, that you can easily reach them while driving).

Switching cameras by hand (and therefor by intuition) might give you a good hint where to place enforced cameras. Carefully recheck every camera change, they must feel "just right", coming not too early, not too late...

My rule of thumb
Wrongly placed camera: CRASH (high probability if a driver doesn't know the track A-Z)
Wrongly timed camera : TIME LOSS (inferior driver reaction to the new view)
Well placed & timed camera : NOONE will even realise there was a camera change, because everything felt so natural.

Keyboard drivers vs. Gamepad drivers
A keyboard driver can reconfigure his key inputs so he can easily switch between different camera views on his own while he's racing (if the track author didn't make it right!), a Gamepad driver doesn't have the same possibilities. So always think of "Who needs what?" when editing your cameras.

That was your introduction to camera useage.

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